

Friars Primary School and Nursery

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	134704
Local Authority	Southend-on-Sea
Inspection number	341505
Inspection dates	5–6 May 2010
Reporting inspector	Alan Lemon

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	437
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Chris Smith
Headteacher	Mrs Andrea Woods
Date of previous school inspection	7 February 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by four additional inspectors. Twenty-one lessons were observed, which involved twelve teachers being seen teaching. Meetings were held with pupils, governors and staff. Inspectors observed the school's work, and looked at a range of school documentation, which included the self-evaluation form, data on pupils' performance, the local authority's external review of the school and safeguarding policy and procedures. One hundred and one parental questionnaires were scrutinised.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- the extent to which standards are rising and all pupils are making progress
- if teaching and the curriculum motivate and engage pupils in learning
- whether leadership succeeds in setting high expectations and driving improvement.

Information about the school

The school is much larger than average and the great majority of pupils are White British. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is well above the national average. A significant proportion of pupils enter or leave school other than at the usual time. The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is average. A new headteacher was appointed in September 2009 at which time the school had a substantial budget deficit.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

3

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

This is a satisfactory and improving school. When the headteacher took over in September 2009, she set out a clear agenda for improvement aimed at pupils achieving higher standards in their work and this has been successful. School self-evaluation is comprehensive and accurate. The completion of a full review of the school before Christmas 2009 has informed a thorough development plan, which has driven improvement. The headteacher has raised expectations and the pace of ensuing development has been brisk. This has created a good capacity for sustained improvement. Governors' access to information about the school's performance and their partnership with the school has been strengthened. As a result, they have acted decisively to make a sharp reduction in expenditure and begin removing the budget deficit.

Staff have benefited enormously from the headteacher's clear direction and ambition. The quality of teaching has improved because of the rigorous monitoring of lessons, which has given teachers targets to achieve; they have responded to these positively. The use of data in planning lessons has been strengthened considerably and this is now integral to setting challenging work for every pupil. The quality of learning is being strengthened by an increasingly intensive use of assessment and creative approaches to learning. A number of teachers are skilled in supporting pupils in evaluating their own and each other's work, which proves to be a great help for them to focus on their progress and bring about improvement. Common to all lessons are opportunities for pupils to work together on tasks in small groups. However, not all pupils are accustomed to this way of working and without close supervision some find it difficult to concentrate; they stop working effectively and this slows their progress. In Nursery and Reception, children make good progress in most areas of learning and join Year 1 at the level expected. However, as a result of too few opportunities in Reception, children's progress in communication, language and literacy, and in calculation, is satisfactory, but not as good as in other areas of learning. Assessment in the Early Years Foundation Stage is improving but at this time it is not always used to ensure children's work and activities are challenging.

Standards, which are broadly average, are higher now than results showed in a number of previous years. While the school is on track to maintain average standards, as evidenced in its progress towards challenging but realistic targets, it is too early for it yet to have established a clear trend of acceptable results. The curriculum has had a thorough review: it meets pupils' needs well and supports their enjoyment of learning. Current planning of work and activities provides a good amount of breadth and consistency in learning from one year to the next. It also offers pupils a good insight

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into the diversity of cultures and encourages their commitment to racial equality, fostering their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Outstanding care, guidance and support are particularly effective because of the impact of the support for pupils and their families and for pupils in vulnerable circumstances. The school manages a good engagement with parents and carers, and has developed the exceptionally strong partnerships that enable it to care for pupils as well as it does.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage by:
 - strengthening assessment and its use to ensure children's activities always challenge them
 - creating more well
 - -planned opportunities for children in Reception to learn communication, language and literacy, and calculation skills.
- Develop the quality of learning by ensuring that pupils work together more effectively.
 - About 40% of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**3**

Pupils are easily motivated, well engaged, enjoy their work and achieve satisfactorily. They respond positively in lessons to teachers' raised expectations and are increasing their rate of progress. This is preparing them soundly for secondary education. The frequent opportunities for them to evaluate their own and others' work in lessons often provides a real incentive to make progress. While pupils' progress is currently ensuring that standards are rising, their progress over time has suffered from underachievement in previous years in English, mathematics and science. Attainment is now broadly average, whereas in the previous few years it had been significantly below average at the end of both Year 2 and Year 6. The tracking of progress is rigorous and teachers have been helped to use data effectively in planning lessons. There is no significant difference in the current achievement of boys and girls and the gap in their performance in all subjects in 2009 has now been greatly narrowed. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities are well supported in teachers' plans and by teaching assistants in lessons so that they make the same progress as other pupils.

Pupils' good behaviour contributes to them feeling safe and they gain further re-assurance from the school's anti-bullying measures and the constant support of staff. They do not feel bullying is a feature of their life in school. Pupils develop a healthy lifestyle from the many opportunities to take part in sports and the school's encouragement of healthy eating. Pupils are actively involved in the life of the school through their school council, as playground leaders, becoming prefects and by older

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pupils helping younger ones to learn and enjoy reading. They work to raise the school's profile in the community, such as taking part in the harvest festival, school choir performances and by raising money for good causes.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	3
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	3
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	3
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

Recent improvement in teaching and the use of assessment has all but eliminated a significant amount of inadequate teaching observed in a review undertaken by the local authority last year. Assessment is used systematically and focuses teaching on raising standards so that all pupils making steady progress. The work set in lessons challenges each pupil's capabilities. Teachers are developing their approaches for promoting learning and, where these are embedded, they have strengthened teaching. Expectations are often high and the pace of learning is usually good. A common and often good feature of lessons is the opportunity for pupils to work on the task together in small groups. Mostly this aids learning but sometimes groups are left for too long on their own: when this happens, pupils lose concentration and stop working effectively. A substantial review of the breadth and balance of the curriculum has introduced

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low.

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changes which strengthen the provision in English and mathematics and promote literacy and numeracy skills across pupils' work and activities. The curriculum retains all of the qualities that give it interest and relevance for pupils. Departures from routines in occasional themed weeks focusing, for example, on exploring mathematics and multi-cultural education, ensure learning stays stimulating and enjoyable. The curriculum is enriched by educational trips, visitors in school and residential experience. There is also on offer a good variety of club activities and sports.

Extremely effective teamwork in school focuses sharply on providing care, guidance and support for pupils. Together, the deputy headteacher, special educational needs co-ordinator, home/school liaison worker and learning mentor give a strong lead to ensuring a high level of response to pupils' needs and support for families. Staff manage pupils' behaviour well and the school takes effective steps to improve attendance. An excellent partnership exists with many outside agencies which bring together, in a very well co-ordinated way, expert advice and support for pupils and their families. Partnership has enabled the transfer of skills to school staff which helps them identify and support pupils in vulnerable circumstances.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	3
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher has tackled low standards resolutely and with success. Monitoring and evaluation by senior leaders are rigorous in identifying the school's strengths and weaknesses and setting challenging targets. Since the headteacher's arrival, the school has been busy with training and developments, which have been directed effectively through detailed improvement planning. This has been well received by staff and they have responded with a shared sense of purpose, especially in regard to strengthening teaching and assessment, and meeting targets. Teachers' use of information from the tracking of pupils' progress has improved significantly. This is raising standards and reinforces the school's promotion of equality of opportunity.

The governing body is beginning to play a decisive role in supporting and challenging the school. They have put a good plan in place for removing the budget deficit, agreeing with the headteacher a number of savings that do not have a significant impact on school improvement.

Outstanding leadership of care, guidance and support has strengthened the school, particularly through the excellent partnerships with other schools and outside agencies,

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and the close involvement developed with parents and carers. This has also has ensured all aspects of safeguarding pupils are in place and managed rigorously. All of the strengths linked to provision for care, guidance and support mean that the school is promoting community cohesion well in the school and locally but not yet in a wider context as part of a planned strategy.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	3
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	3
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

Early Years Foundation Stage

Nursery and Reception children enjoy the wide variety of play and activities indoors and outside. They have good opportunities to move freely between areas, which helps them make good progress in most areas of learning in the Early Years Foundation Stage curriculum. They improve their knowledge and understanding of the world through listening to stories and developing ideas from them, such as finding out what real bears are like. Construction, painting and role-playing enables creative development and very good equipment, such as climbing frames and bicycles encourage physical development. Children's opportunities to acquire communication, language and literacy skills are good in the Nursery but satisfactory in Reception, where they are less well developed because there is sometimes a lack of challenge in these activities.

Leadership and management are satisfactory. Assessment is in place but its use is not rigorous enough to ensure all activities are well planned and challenging. Parents' involvement is encouraged and many come into school to support children's learning. The excellent work done by the school in care, support and guidance also results in effective work with some families. The procedures promoting children's welfare and safety are well managed.

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These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	3

Views of parents and carers

A small minority of parents returned completed questionnaires. The great majority of these parents totally agree that their child enjoys school, is kept safe and is helped to have a healthy life style. They also totally agree that teaching is good and the school is led and managed effectively. In all of these respects, inspectors uphold parents' views. A few of the parents who returned questionnaires had some reservations about whether the school keeps them informed about their child's progress, the extent to which the school helps them to support their child's learning and how well it takes account of their suggestions and concerns. However, inspectors found that engagement with parents is good. A few parents also think that the school does not deal with unacceptable behaviour effectively. Inspectors found that staff managed pupils' behaviour well and that behaviour was good as a result.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Friars Primary School and Nursery to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school. The inspection team received 101 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 437 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	45	45	50	50	1	1	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	45	45	49	49	5	5	2	2
The school informs me about my child's progress	30	30	54	53	12	12	5	5
My child is making enough progress at this school	30	30	58	57	9	9	3	3
The teaching is good at this school	38	38	56	55	5	5	2	2
The school helps me to support my child's learning	35	35	49	49	15	15	2	2
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	31	31	62	61	6	6	2	2
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	27	27	54	53	8	8	2	2
The school meets my child's particular needs	27	27	63	62	5	5	4	4
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	23	23	53	52	16	16	8	8
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	23	23	55	54	14	14	7	7
The school is led and managed effectively	31	31	60	59	6	6	3	3
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	39	39	49	49	10	10	2	2

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	51	45	0	4
Primary schools	6	41	42	10
Secondary schools	8	34	44	14
Sixth forms	10	37	50	3
Special schools	32	38	25	5
Pupil referral units	12	43	31	14
All schools	9	40	40	10

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above is for the period 1 September to 31 December 2009 and is the most recently published data available (see www.ofsted.gov.uk). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn term 2009 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement. ■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils. ■ The quality of teaching. ■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships. ■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



7 May 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Friars Primary School and Nursery, Shoeburyness, SS3 9XX

Thank you for your warm welcome and help during our visit to your school recently. Thanks also to the group of pupils who met with an inspector to share their views of school.

As a result of our inspection, inspectors decided that your school is satisfactory in providing you with an education. It is effective in several ways:

- the extent to which you feel safe, adopt a healthy lifestyle and contribute in school and beyond is good
- the effectiveness of the care, guidance and support you receive from school is outstanding
- you are making steady progress, and sometimes good progress, in lessons and the standard of your work is rising
- the headteacher has made many essential improvements to the school and all the staff are working hard to make these succeed
- the work and activities planned for you are good because they are made enjoyable, interesting and relevant to your needs.

Your school could be more effective in these ways:

- in helping some pupils learn to work more effectively together in small groups
- improving the opportunities for children in Reception to develop their communication, language and literacy, as well as their calculation skills.

Inspectors found that you work hard and behave well and you should continue to do so. I wish you all the best for the future.

Yours sincerely

Alan Lemon

Lead inspector

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